



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Blue Ridge Ranger District
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File Code: 2710

Date: February 21, 2008

Dear Forest Stakeholder:

The US Forest Service is asking for your comments on the following applications for special use authorizations to use National Forest System (NFS) lands:

- ❖ The Southern Appalachian Bicycle Association (SABA), represented by Joanna Atkinson, is requesting a special use authorization to conduct portions of an organized bicycle ride known as the “Circle the Bald Bike Ride”. The event would occur on Saturday, April 26, 2008 between 8:00 AM and 1:00 PM. This event would use National Forest System (NFS) lands at Owl Creek Gap (the highest point along Owl Creek Road) (see attached map). Temporary facilities would be set up at the site and would include shade tents, tables, lawn chairs, water containers, and one automobile to transport workers and supplies. Signs would also be placed on the road shoulder approaching the rest stop site to inform riders and warn motorists about the site. SABA is expecting between 100 and 200 participants in the event as well as 25 spectators at this site. The majority of the event would be conducted on paved highways, which are under the authority of state and local law enforcement agencies. No ground disturbing activities would take place on NFS lands and all trash and temporary facilities would be removed by SABA at the conclusion of the event. This is a fund raising event put on by SABA in collaboration with the Towns County Chamber of Commerce and coincides with the Tour De Georgia bicycle race. Proceeds are intended to go toward the construction of bicycle and hiking trails on NFS lands. SABA will still be assessed the normal fees associated with this type of recreational event. The route for this ride does not conflict with the Tour De Georgia race. This is an annual event and SABA has established a good reputation for using NFS land responsibly; therefore, this scoping will cover subsequent events for the next three years unless a major component (time of year, location, activity, etc.) changes.
- ❖ The Corvette Group of the Blue Ridge Mountains, represented by Gene Clopton, is requesting a special use authorization to conduct the annual “Top of Georgia” all Corvettes show. The event would occur on Saturday, June 21, 2008 between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM. This event would use a portion of the parking lot for the Brasstown Bald Visitor Center (see attached map). Temporary facilities would be set up at the site and would include shade tents, tables, lawn chairs, a public address system, and portable generator. A food vendor and up to five Corvette memorabilia vendors would also be on site and would set up temporary facilities necessary to prepare and distribute the merchandise. The Corvette Group is expecting up to 200 participants (100 cars) in the event as well as 400 - 600 spectators. The event would be conducted on paved surfaces within the parking lot and the grass island near the toll booth. Participants and spectators would be required to pay the normal entrance fee per vehicle for the day of the show. No ground disturbing activities would take place on NFS lands and all trash and temporary facilities would be removed by the Corvette Group at the conclusion of the event. This is



an annual event and the Corvette Group has established a good reputation for using NFS land responsibly; therefore, this scoping will cover subsequent events for the next three years unless a major component (time of year, location, activity, etc.) changes.

- ❖ The Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (SORBA), represented by Robin Allen, is requesting a special use authorization to conduct a recreation event at the Jake and Bull Mountain Trail Complex and on National Forest System (NFS) roads in the Jake/Bull Mountain area. The event would begin on April 26, 2008 and end on April 27, 2008. SORBA is expecting up to 150 participants to take part in the event. The event would consist of group mountain bike trail rides on the roads and trails. The event participants would be staging at Camp Wahsega and riding the Forest Service roads and trails in the area around the camp. SORBA would be allowed to install temporary provisions along the trail to facilitate their event (signs and water coolers) and a rest stop (including a porta-pottie) near the intersection of FS 77 and Jones Creek Road. The trails would remain open to public access throughout the duration of the event. Event participants would not be allowed on the trails until after 10:00 AM since turkey season will be open at this time. SORBA would be responsible for removing any trash that they bring in to the trail complex. All of the temporary provisions would be removed on the last day of the event. The Jake/Bull Mountain trailheads would remain open to the public and the event would not use any of the facilities other than the trails. The Jake/Bull Mountain Trail Complex is considered multi-use (hiking, biking, and horseback riding) and is designed with this type of activity in mind. This is an annual event and SORBA has established a good reputation for using NFS land responsibly; therefore, this scoping will cover subsequent events for the next three years unless a major component (time of year, location, activity, etc.) changes.
- ❖ The North American Trail Ride Conference (NATRC), represented by Debbie Jones, is requesting a special use authorization to conduct a recreation event at the Jake and Bull Mountain Trail Complex. The event would utilize the Jake Mountain dispersed camping area for camping and the Jake and Bull Mountain Trail Complex to conduct a competitive trail ride. The event would start on May 16, 2008 at 9:00 AM and end on May 18, 2008 at 6:00 PM. NATRC is expecting up to 60 participants to compete and 30 spectators to attend. The event would consist of a competitive trail ride of 60 miles in length that would be judged by a NATRC veterinarian. NATRC would be responsible for providing portable toilets for campers. NATRC would be allowed to install temporary provisions along the trail to facilitate their event (signs, flagging, aid stations). The trails would remain open to public access throughout the duration of the event. The NATRC would be responsible for removing the trash and temporary facilities immediately following the event and the portable toilets within 3 days following the event. The Bull Mountain trailhead would remain open to the public and the event would not use any of the facilities other than the Jake Mountain parking lot/camping area and the trails. The Jake/Bull Mountain Trail Complex is considered multi-use (hiking, biking, and horseback riding) and is designed with this type of activity in mind. This is an annual event and the NATRC has established a good reputation for using NFS land responsibly; therefore, this scoping will cover subsequent events for the next three years unless a major component (time of year, location, activity, etc.) changes.
- ❖ The US Army, Camp Frank D. Merrill, represented by Gary Jenkins, is requesting a special use authorization to conduct the 11th annual Mountain Ranger Run. The event is

scheduled to occur on May 10, 2008 from 6:00 AM until 7:00 PM and would have approximately 600 participants and up to 800 spectators. This race would be held in conjunction with the 5th Ranger Training Battalion's open house, which showcases Army Ranger mountaineering techniques. Start and finish line activities would be held at Camp Merrill where sufficient facilities are available to accommodate the crowd that is associated with the event. The event will use NFS roads and trails for a 15 kilometer running event and a 31 kilometer mountain bike event. Activities will be restricted to designated routes that are designed for the activity being conducted on them (biking will only occur on roads or bike trails). Temporary facilities would be set up along the route to help facilitate the event. Facilities would consist of portable toilets, shade tents, tables, chairs, water coolers, etc. that will be removed by the Army following the event. This event is an annual event and the Army Rangers have established a good reputation for using NFS land responsibly; therefore, this scoping will cover subsequent events for the next three years unless a major component (time of year, location, activity, etc.) changes.

- ❖ The Tour de Georgia Foundation, Inc. (The Tour), represented by Chris Aronhalt of Medalist Sports, is requesting a special use authorization to conduct the Tour de Georgia cycling event at the Brasstown Bald Visitor Center. The event is scheduled to occur on Saturday, April 26, 2008 between 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM. The Tour would be expected to begin setting up for the event on Friday, April 25th in the afternoon. The Tour would use the parking lot to hold product demonstrations and set up temporary facilities including: vendor booths, a public address system, a large television screen, portable toilets, product demonstration areas. The vendor booths would sell merchandise and display items from the major sponsors. The Tour would set up the finish line, press coverage area, and awards stage outside the Visitor Center. The Tour would have exclusive use of the interior of the Visitor Center for an event sponsor hospitality area, to the theatre for a press room, and to the utility rooms for participant drug testing. The Tour would place several portable toilets at the gravel pull-offs along Georgia 180 Spur prior to the event. The Tour would compensate the Forest Service for all personnel time required to monitor the event, as well as for the parking fees for the entire parking lot and use of the Visitor Center building. This is an annual event and the Tour de Georgia representatives have established a good reputation for using NFS land responsibly; therefore, this scoping will cover subsequent events for the next three years unless a major component (time of year, location, activity, etc.) changes.
- ❖ The Towns County Chamber of Commerce (COC), represented by Dale Rice, is requesting a special use authorization to conduct vendor services at the Brasstown Bald parking lot during the Tour De Georgia bicycle race. The event is scheduled to occur on Saturday, April 26, 2008 between 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM. The COC would be expected to begin setting up for the event on Friday, April 25th in the afternoon. Activities would be confined to the Brasstown Bald Visitor Center parking lot and surrounding area. The COC would be authorized to sell food, non-alcoholic beverages, and souvenirs and provide a bike valet service in the Brasstown Bald parking lot during the Tour De Georgia race. The COC would also organize local food service providers and fund raising groups to provide goods and services under their permit. The vendor services would be conducted on the paved, gravel, or grassed areas within and around the parking lot, as well as the gravel pull-offs along GA 180 Spur. Signs would be placed at strategic points in the vicinity of the activities to help facilitate the event and promote the services provided by the COC. No ground disturbing activities are expected on NFS lands and all

trash and temporary facilities would be removed by the COC within 72 hours of the conclusion of the event. This is a fund raising venture for the COC and all proceeds collected by the chamber would be used to promote the local economy. The COC would be assessed the normal fees associated with this type of recreational event. This is an annual activity and the COC has established a good reputation for using NFS land responsibly; therefore, this scoping will cover subsequent activities for the next three years unless a major component (time of year, location, activity, etc.) changes.

- ❖ 55Nine, LLC is requesting a special use authorization to conduct a mountain bike race at the Jake/Bull Mountain Trail Complex area and surrounding National Forest System (NFS) roads. The event participants will conduct the majority of their activities, including starting line staging and finish line ceremonies at Camp Wahsega and ride NFS roads and trails on August 16, 2008 directly from there. The race course would consist of a fifty (50) mile loop on NFS roads and trails. The course will be marked with signs and course marshals will be positioned where course direction is unclear. Three rest stops will be set up along the way (at Winding Stair Gap, Bull Mountain Trailhead, and the intersection of NFS roads 28-1 and 28A). The rest stops will also serve as checkpoints to make sure all participants are accounted for. The event would involve from 200 to 400 participants, 15 race staff, and less than 100 spectators. 55Nine will be responsible for removing any trash created as a result of the event immediately following the activity. The Jake/Bull Mountain trailheads would remain open to the public and the event would not use any of the facilities other than the trails. The Jake/Bull Mountain Trail Complex is considered multi-use (hiking, biking, and horseback riding) and is designed with this type of activity in mind. All events and rides will be conducted on existing trails, roads, or parking areas and will not result in any ground disturbance. This is an annual event and 55 Nine representatives have established a good reputation for using NFS land responsibly; therefore, this scoping will cover subsequent events for the next three years unless a major component (time of year, location, activity, etc.) changes.
- ❖ Southern Appalachian Timber, Inc., owned by Joshua Johns, is requesting a special use authorization to reconstruct 1,910 feet of logging road across NFS lands. The road is located at the end of Jake Mountain Road (FS 299) and has been periodically used to access the timber on adjacent private land as well as NFS land. This road has been used in the past ten to fifteen years to harvest salvage timber in this area. The road is currently impassable due to the proliferation of vegetation since it was last used. Mr. Johns would like to open the road up to haul the timber from the adjacent private land. Mr. Johns would be responsible for constructing and retiring the road to Forest Service standards upon completion of his logging activities. No timber would be removed from NFS land as a result of the road construction. Mr. Johns would be required to repair any wear or damage to FS 299 that resulted from his use of the road. Mr. Johns would also be required to cease hauling activities if his use conflicts with Forest Service activities or any previously scheduled events that are to occur at the Jake Mountain camping area and/or trailhead. Use of the road would also be subject to weather conditions and could be halted at the discretion of the Forest Service. Use of this road would be needed for a two month duration. The only alternative to using this road is to haul the timber across Nimblewill Creek, which is classified as a trout stream by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division. The Georgia Forestry Commission has recommended using the route across NFS lands to lessen the possible water quality impacts to Nimblewill Creek.

An analysis is currently being conducted by Forest Service personnel for these types of special use authorization requests, including an assessment of the possible environmental effects of the proposed actions on NFS lands. Also, the Forest Service is closely monitoring the impact that these types of events may have on other users of the areas.

In general, the special use process involves a review of each application received to determine how the request would affect NFS lands and the public's use of these lands. Special use applications must be consistent with Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and special orders that apply to the National Forests. Applications must also be consistent with the Forest Plan for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests (January, 2004), including all objectives and standards for management of the lands where a proposed special use area(s) is located.

I would like to hear from you regarding the proposed activities before making my decision for this request. The proposed activities appear to fall into a category of actions that may be excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment. This determination, however, will not be finalized until after consideration of your comments and concerns.

To have your comments considered in our decision process, we would appreciate receiving your comments by March 21, 2008. This will help ensure a complete and thorough analysis of these activities. Send your written comments to the Blue Ridge Ranger District at the address provided on the letterhead. You may also comment by phone or fax (see letterhead), by e-mail to jcowart@fs.fed.us, or in person at our office on Highway 515 West in Blairsville, Georgia.

Please note that you will be sent further correspondence on the proposed action *only* if you request a response in your reply. Feel free to call the Forest Service office if you have additional questions or would like more information regarding these proposed activities.

Thank you for your interest and involvement.

Sincerely,

/S/ ALAN POLK

Alan Polk
District Ranger